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The South India CHURCHMAN

The Magazine of the Church of South India

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● DECEMBER 1992

"... When the Shepherds had seen the child they made known to others ..." (Luke 2:17)



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The South India CHURCHMAN

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DECEMBER 1992

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25 Years Ago!

When we pass the Government house and see the flying aloft, we know that Governor is in residence, it is he who confers glory on the building. Do we permit the Incarnate Son of God to confer, by His presence, glory on the Church—on our private life as Christians on our Christian life; on our Christian family life, in its aspects of administration, worship, evangelism, service; on our public life as Christians? Do the eyes of the world perceive that the Christian Church is indeed glorious because of Him who alone is her glory? 'My eyes have seen the glory of thy people, Israel.'

—Churchman 1967

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Church of England Votes to Ordain Women

ROBERT NOWELL*

The Church of England can look forward to having its first women priests within the next year or two following a historic decision of its general synod to give final approval to the measure making this possible.

But it was only by a slender margin that the measure obtained the necessary two-thirds majorities in all three of the synod's houses (bishops, clergy and laity). The bishops voted in favour by 39 to 13 (75 per cent), the clergy 176 to 74 (70.4 per cent), but the laity by only 169 to 167 (50.7 per cent). If two of the laity had voted the other way (to make it 167 to 86) the measure would have been defeated. Nevertheless, these majorities were significantly higher than had been indicated by previous votes on the issue.

Before the first women priests can be ordained the measure must be approved by both houses of parliament and given royal assent. This is not expected before next June or July at the earliest. Then the two canons that will implement it have to be promulgated, which means another general synod vote—probably at its meeting in November, 1993, if that deadline is missed the next synod session is not until July 1994. Only after that can the first woman be ordained to the priesthood. The Church of England presently has some 1300 women deacons, virtually all of whom are likely to want to go forward to the priesthood.

Opponents, in a five-hour debate which was broadcast on BBC radio and the second half of which was broadcast on BBC-2 television, concentrated on what they saw as the lack of a sufficient consensus within the church for such a change, as well as on the measure's defects and the threat it presented of institutionalizing schism within the church of England. It allows bishops to make their own no-go areas for women priests, and parishes can similarly refuse to accept them.

One factor which no doubt helped to persuade waverers was the realization that if the measure failed to gain its

two-thirds majorities, the question would come back to the new synod to be elected in 1995, no doubt with a draft measure showing far less consideration for opponents of women priests, and that the Church of England would thus face the best part of another ten years of argument on this issue.

But in the debate what may have been the decisive argument in favour was the credibility of the church and of the gospel it is called to preach. 'We are in danger of not being heard if women are exercising leadership in every area of our society's life, save the ordained priesthood', said the Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey. The Bishop of Birmingham, Mark Santer, described the credibility of the gospel as the key issue. 'What kind of good news is it that only men may represent Christ in the priesthood of the church?', he asked.

After the vote the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Archbishop of York, John Habgood, issued a joint statement calling for a period of 'quiet reflection and deep prayer in which emotions are calmed, not further inflamed', following this result which to many was a source of joy and relief but to others would bring anguish. Urging all members of the Church of England to abide by the synod's decision, they said: 'Hasty or ill-considered action would, in our view, be inappropriate and serve no good purpose.' Noting the delay of at least a year before the measure could become law and come into effect, they said: 'There is, therefore, plenty of time for detailed discussion with those still deeply opposed to the legislation about how their consciences can be safeguarded and their rightful place within the mainstream life of the Church of England maintained.'

This plea was reinforced by Dr. Carey in his presidential address which closed the synod's three-day session. Making a strong plea for unity, Carey warned against rushing into making a stand: 'Hasty action, whether in this synod or by people in parishes, is not a particularly helpful way forward,' he said. He also re-emphasized the bishops' determination to see that there is room in the Church for

opponents of women priests. 'There is certainly no question of those who continue to doubt the theological justification for the priesting of women having any less place within our church,' he said.

The Vatican's reaction to the decision was that it constituted a 'new and grave obstacle' to relations between the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church. But Cardinal Basil Hume, Archbishop of Westminster, while quoting Popes Paul VI and John Paul II to the effect that the ordination of women priests 'constitutes a major obstacle to any hope of visible and organic unity between our churches and hinders the process of convergence which has been such a feature of our ecumenical relations in recent years', nevertheless stated firmly that the Church of England's decision did not signal a breakdown in ecumenical relations.

How many Church of England clergymen will wish to leave the ministry over this issue is unlikely to become clear for some time. It is only when the measure comes into effect with the promulgation of the two canons implementing it that compensation becomes available for clergy who feel conscientiously unable to continue their ministry in a church with women priests—and they have ten years in which to make up their minds.

The issue in fact arose about seven years ago when a congregation upset by the Church of England's 1985 decision to ordain women as deacons sought to go over to the Roman Catholic Church en bloc under the leadership of its vicar. But the English Catholic authorities resisted the idea of creating a church within the church. The congregation in question is affiliated to the continuing church that emerged among Episcopalians in opposition to women priests. [EPS]

—ROBERT NOWELL, U.K.

NEWS

AUSTRALIA: ANGLICAN SYNOD OF SYDNEY SAYS NO TO WOMEN PRIESTS

The Synod of the Anglican Diocese of Sydney, Australia, meeting 12-16 October, rejected a measure which would allow the ordination of women priests in Australia, a press release from the Anglican Press Service (APS) of 23-October said. A secret ballot showed that 65 per cent of clergy and 57 per cent of lay members in the Synod supported a motion that Synod dissent from the Church of England Clarification Canon. The canon seeks to repeal any law, rule of discipline, principle, practice or tradition of the church inherited and applicable in any diocese, which prevents the ordination of women to the priesthood, the APS report said. In March this year, the Anglican Archbishop of Perth, Peter Carnely, ordained Australia's first women priests (EPS 92.03.52). Earlier, in January (EPS 92.02.38), Bishop Owen Dowling of the Canberra-Goulburn diocese was taken to court by opponents of women priests over his plan to ordain 11 women deacons as priests on 2 February. The court granted the injunction.

FINLAND: WOMEN TO BE ORDAINED AS ELDERS

The Adventist Press Service (APD) reports that Finish Seventh-day Adventists have decided to ordain women as elders. Previously women could serve as elders but only men were ordained to the office, which is understood as a position of spiritual leadership in the congregation. The work of elders in the SdA Church is limited to the

congregation in which they are ordained. At the world SdA assembly in 1990, the church decided against ordaining women as pastors but recommended to all divisions of the church that women elders be ordained. Worldwide the SdA church numbers about 8 million baptized Christians in 190 countries.

PHILIPPINES: SUSPECTED KILLER OF RADIO PREACHER ARRESTED

The US-based *News Network International* reports (23-October) that police in the southern Philippines of Zamboanga have arrested a Muslim student for allegedly taking part in the 21-September slaying of a Protestant radio preacher and two others at a Far East Broadcasting Company radio station. The report said the suspected 22-year-old Abdil Basid Jikiri, acted as a lookout while his two accomplices forced their way into the radio station and shot dead Gregorio Hapalla, 58, and two others.

BANGLADESH: MUSLIMS, THUGS, ATTACK CHRISTIAN VILLAGE

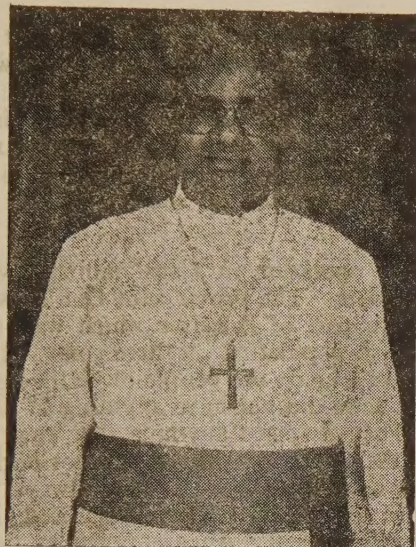
The World Evangelical Fellowship *Information Interchange* reports that Muslim fundamentalists, joined by local thugs, savagely attacked a Christian village in southern Bangladesh recently. The 23-November report said attackers torched the church building and seven homes and ransacked a score of other residences. No one was killed or seriously injured. [EPS]



We Wish you All
A very Happy Christmas

Blessed are the Peace-Makers

MOST REVD. VASANT P. DANDIN, *Moderator*



MODERATOR DANDIN

People are greatly disturbed and frustrated, specially after seeing what has happened at Ayodhya. The country, known for its religious tolerance, an abode of all religions, is now charged with tension and communal hatred. What happened at Ayodhya stands as a sensitive matter which has a bearing on the unity and integrity of the nation and maintenance of harmony among people. The sordid incidents have thrown the entire country into a turmoil with unpredictable consequences. Every citizen has a stake in the preservation of peace and the rule of law. Anything else will only mean insecurity, chaos and anarchy.

In this backdrop the Church in India is called to share the Peace that comes from God the Almighty, the Creator of mankind.

The Hebrew word for Peace is *Shalom* which is a comprehensive word with a number of meanings related to daily life. The fundamental meaning is 'whole', 'well-being',

harmony with a stress on material prosperity untouched by violence. Peace essentially is the base for harmonious community. According to the Bible, to greet anyone with peace is to confer benefit and to admit mutual confidence. 'Peace be with you; I will care for all your wants' (Judges 19:20) and the whole episode as we read it in the nineteenth chapter indicates the magnitude of the word *Shalom*, how it is portrayed and practised by the people of God in those days. An incident in the mission of the prophet Samuel endorses it. 'The elders of the City (Bethlem) came to meet him (Samuel) trembling and said, Do you come peaceably'. (I Samuel 16:4). The servants of the Lord are expected to be the peace-makers and make society harmonious.

In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gives us the qualities of blessed people who pass on to us the Principal graces of a Christian: 'Blessed are the peace-makers for they shall be called sons of God' (Matthew 5:9). The blessed ones are pure towards God and peaceable towards people. These qualities should enable us to chastise ourselves, first of all, and then urge our friends not to indulge in any violence or any kind of offence that would affect the normal life of our Society. This demands us to do all we can to reconcile those who fight with each other and to promote Christ's love amongst all people. As St. Paul admonishes in his letter to the Ephesians, '... eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace' (4:3). Peace is that by which the Spiritual unity of the Corporate life of the Church is to be maintained and this life has to be shared with our neighbours—our friends. Thus we become the peace-makers, sharing the genuine love and durable peace which we receive from our Lord Jesus Christ.

At this Christmas let us kneel down at the manger where the babe Jesus is laid and pray to the 'Prince of Peace' to comfort the bereaved families, strengthen the hands of the peace-makers and usher in His Kingdom of love and mutual respect. May God bless everyone of us, our dear motherland by granting His Peace.

I wish you all a happy and peaceful Christmas.



Unequivocal Divine Intervention

REV. S. VASANTHAKUMAR, *Bangalore*

(Luke 1 : 26-56, 2 : 1-21, 3 : 23-38)
(Matthew : 1 & 2)

The story of the birth of Jesus is quite familiar to all of us and it requires no repetition. The birth narratives in both the Gospels of Matthew and Luke are so powerful that it continues to be relevant to us even today as they were to the people to whom the Gospels were originally addressed.

1. Divine intervention in history

The special feature of the birth of Jesus is that it is God who took the initiative in his birth. The conception was not due to human efforts, it is the purposeful design of God. Both the evangelists, namely, Matthew and Luke are very particular in emphasising that the conception is by the Holy Spirit and not by the human agency and that is for the purpose of 'saving his people' (Matt. 1 : 21) and to establish God's kingdom which will have no end. (Luke 1 : 33)

Even though it is a divine initiative human participation in the divine plan was necessary. Mary who was a virgin had to agree to the plan of God and Joseph had to concur with the angelic decree. It is when human beings fall in line with the plan and purpose of God, divine intervention in history takes place and divine intervention is always to save His people and to establish the values of the Kingdom.

2. Unassuming birth

Both Luke and Matthew record the genealogy of Jesus. It is surprising to note that in the male dominated society of that time the names of a few women are recorded under genealogy. During the time of Jesus women had no role to play in public life. Even in the temple they were segregated and made to sit separately. They were not allowed to preach or teach in the Synagogue. The name of the father only was perpetuated and not the mother. In this context the mention of the names of women in the genealogy of Jesus is for a theological purpose of communicating that women have a role to play in the mission of God. Again Mary plays a greater role than Joseph and Mary sings in praise of her child. These are indicative that in the mission of God both men and women have a role.

3. Periphery made centre

The birth of the Messiah is for a particular purpose. It was not to identify with the nobility of the time but

with the marginalised and the outcasts of that day. One of Jesus' first visitors were the shepherds who were outside the city gates watching over the sheep and not in the company of the elite of society. Even in his ministry, the people who were around him were sinners, tax collectors and women of ill-repute. He was a Messiah to the marginalised and the oppressed of society.

The area of operation in Jesus' ministry was Galilee and not Jerusalem. The province of Galilee was situated in the northern part of Palestine which was surrounded by a non Jewish population on three sides. The Gentile influence was strong on the people of Galilee and as such the orthodox Jews did not have anything to do with the Galileans. They despised anything that emerged out of Galilee and they were considered as unorthodox people. On the other hand the Galileans were always up in arms against those in power. They organised movements against the ruling class. An area such as this became the central place for Jesus' ministry and people who were despised by society occupied the central place in Jesus' ministry.

4. Threat to the powers that be

The birth of Jesus is being referred to as the birth of the Messiah. He is called Immanuel meaning 'God with us.' The wisemen referred to him as the King—but a King who lay in a manger instead of an ornate cradle in a palace; a King without a crown and a King in the company of baying livestock instead of in the midst of praise singers of the Royal Court. Yet the scriptures testify to his messianic role; the stars indicate his presence; the movement of people—both intellectual and ordinary to visit him—demonstrates that he is of divine origin. This divine origin itself is a threat to those in power and they were shaken by his birth. To this end the earthly king in order to perpetuate his sovereignty sought to destroy the heavenly king, and goes to the extent of destroying innocent children in order to achieve his evil designs but God's plan prevails.

The theological significance that the writers want to convey to us through the birth narratives is that the Church following its Lord should learn to identify itself with the marginalised and oppressed and not the ruling classes of the day. The Churches' area of operation should be with the ordinary people, those who were at the periphery of society in order to make them subjects of history.

Priorities of Environmental Conservation

MRS. FELICITA S. BAILEY, M.A., LITT. Dharwar

God makes springs flow into the valleys and rivers run between hills. They provide water for the wild animals and in the trees nearby the birds make their nests and sing.

From the sky he sends rain on the hills; and the earth is filled with His blessings. He makes grass grow for the cattle and plants for man to use. So that he can grow his crops and produce wine to make him happy; Olive oil to make him cheerful and bread to give him strength.

Dear friends, how beautiful, bountiful and thoughtful is the creation of God Almighty. But what is the present state of God's beautiful creation? In the name of development for the last two hundred odd years we have been polluting the soil, water and air, we have driven many human societies and countless wild life species to extinction. We have blocked the rivers and torn and burnt down the ancient forests; we have poisoned the air, the rain, and punched holes in the sky.

Man has altered the vital function of the global biosphere. Massive changes have affected planetary life. Since the earliest times nearly 350 million years, life forms started stirring, continents have moved, mountain ranges have been made and unmade and ages of heat and cold have waxed and waned. Many radical changes have taken place; but always life has survived and evolved and above all developed.

Let us trace the first phase of development by going back to the Ice Age i.e. 18000 years ago. We find that man emerged as a skilled, equipped hunter gatherer. Then came the origins of agriculture and the end of nomadic life to some extent. Settlements appeared and animal and plants were domesticated. But even then he did not cause as great a depletion of Nature as is found today on this planet.

The first assault widely recognised was when irrigation resulted in Salinization. Trade monopoly and imperialism followed quickly. But the first known depletion of Natural resources was in the 19th Century due to the industrial growth, the very first step towards, modern so called development, or progress. Spread of the Industrial Rev. resulted in commercial logging and improved technology. It is at this point that *Nature started taking beating from man*. As our Late PM Indira Gandhi once put it, 'Modern development encroached on nature.

Tall trees and green fields give way to concrete Jungles. Man himself loses touch with this world and forgets that he is an intrinsic part of Nature around him'.

Though the oil industry was launched as early as 1859, oil as a major source of energy became popular only from the 1950's. What oil resources were not affected so apparently for nearly a hundred years became totally affected within a short span of 45 years. Today the slogan that assaults our ears from every nook and corner of the world is 'Save Oil'.

This slogan reflects the doom and disaster society faces in the very near future. In 1972 Dennis Meadows gave a report called 'Limits to Growth'. It was a magnificent eye-opener to the present evergrowing crisis. But many nations chose to ignore the warning. 'Limits to growth dwells on the irrational development of men's society which is continually increasing its needs. *There is no sustainable development.*

By sustainable development we mean a way of satisfying needs for people today, which does not make it more difficult for people tomorrow to satisfy their needs. *Man is so hedonistic and desperate to enjoy his Today that tomorrow does not seem all that important to him.* He is retrospectively destroying his own species by using Nature's bounty. According to a prominent Social Scientist, 'The human race will be the only species that has minutely monitored its own extinction.'

Let me take you into the future for a glimpse. In A.D. 2500, the rivers have evaporated, the Lakes have dried. The earth bears a barren look. It is no more green. *It is charred Black.* The last of the Homosapiens are struggling to survive in a specially constructed Artificial System. Alas! they give up the struggle and die. *The world has come to an end!* Who, my friends, is responsible for this chaos? It is man and man himself who is digging his own grave.

The growing threats to the future are real and not fictitious. *We need to change our tyrannical attitude towards Nature.* Behaviour reflects attitude, but then it is Vice Versa as attitude also reflects behaviour. And when you want to change attitudes, the most effective way often to do it is to change behaviour first. Excessive consumption and mindless wastage should be brought under control. Or else the threat looking over your shoulder will engulf you in no time.

In spite of the predictions of doom and decay man is hesitant to commit himself both to the responsibility of

This paper was presented at the Seminar on Communication or Development held at Vijayawada. Mrs. Suma Bailey is a lecturer working at Dharwar.

creating a new world and in changing his life-style and economic greed. *The rich countries* will have to *adjust* to simpler standards of living because the present material flows are above sustainable limits. *There are no infinite resources to ensure further life or development.*

According to Dennis Meadows 'Anyone who uses the word 'infinite' with regard to natural resources is either very stupid or totally uninformed, because there is nothing *infinite in our World Today*. This definitely makes our natural resources a hazard. So the fastest, cheapest and most environmentally safe way to reduce the gap between what you need and what you have is to reduce what you need and not increase what you have.

It is generally believed that the World's consumption is on a 80/20% ratio. That is in some countries like the developing countries 80% of the population exist just beyond the poverty line and their consumption is just 20% of the natural resources because *their needs are limited*. When as the other 20% consume 80% of the natural resources as their needs are unlimited i.e. *They have a high standard of living and so consume more*. The vice versa is found in Developed Countries where 80% are having a high standard of life and therefore consume more natural resources and a mere 20% may have limited needs.

If we sit back and imagine that somehow the current instruments for setting prices and the current instruments for developing technology will solve ecological problems we are heading for a major catastrophe. Because the values of our present society are the ones that spell disaster. If we don't respect natural systems. If we think humanity can exist apart from nature. If we don't care about future generations and if we think that the army is an appropriate way to settle international disputes then we are totally and irrevocably mistaken. Because our greed and our so called technologies and development will take us in one direction i.e. *more armed forces a bigger gap between the rich and the poor and above all more desecration of Nature.*

We should aim at better communications and behaviours. One of the real insights is how much power can come from communication. We have to realise and communicate the fact that the extinction of one species sets off a chain reaction of annihilation of other species down the line. *Unchecked avarice and desperate poverty have made man negligent of a nature which gave him its bounty willingly. The onus of gratitude for this bounty lies heavily on each of us.* As Mahatma Gandhi put it 'Today industrialisation has become instrumental in exploiting crores of people under the hands of a few. Behind machines people have motive of profit and not of Social Welfare. I oppose this kind of exploitation. I do not want machines to be destroyed but I want to limit their use'. Yes dear friends machines rule the World today and unless we limit their use and change our hedonistic life-style we cannot hope to have a literally bright future. It is of primary importance to know that each and every nation is responsible for not only cleaning up the mess that we have created but also trying to deal with it in a spirit of togetherness. *Unless we have this Ecovision we will not be able in any way to communicate to the world our ideas of Eco-balance.*

Preserving biodiversity is one of the main items on the agenda of saving planet earth. Tropical forests that harbour some of the richest bio-diversity are under severe pressure the world over. Water pollution has reached a new high. It is necessary to realise that industrial effluent and industrial fumes can be treated thereby minimising their danger to environment. The untreated radioactive waste, toxic chemicals and heavy metals poured indiscriminately into the waters have endangered and degraded many aquatic habitats. Many Ecosystems have collapsed. At this juncture I deem it relevant to refer to the dumping of toxic wastes in Somalia. The Director of the United Nations Environment Programme Mr. Mostafa. K. Tollu warns that at least one million tonnes of toxic waste may be dumped in Somalia by the end of this year. The dumping of toxic waste in Somalia is a glaring example of how far developing countries can be exploited.

The Climax is not far when man faces the extinction due to his own pioneered effort of self-destruction. We are aware of the disasters that are going to engulf more than 40% of the global land. Unless we have a combined effort to provide a vegetative cover for this earth, we are sure to face total extinction.

In this decade the holding of the earth summit at Rio-de-Jeneiro does not seem to have done much good. In the book 'Towards a green World' the shallowness of many of the recent environmental conventions is brought out lucidly. All levels of power are found only in the individualised countries. There should be a system of environmental governance based on rights and obligations at all levels from the globe to the nation and from the nation to the community.

For centuries man has been exploiting nature. There has been no concern whatever for conserving the bounty which man usurped. Environmental degradation is not an overnight occurrence. The dastardly destruction of Nature has to end. *The clarion call is on and we cannot afford to disregard it.* Have we ever stopped to consider what will happen if Nature were to unleash all her strength and all her furies? Will man be able to face the impact of Nature's Fury? There are so many warnings of this. The recent cyclonic toll can be an eye-opener. It is high time we had the right priorities of Ecovision. Ecovision should enable us to think wisely, live wisely and act wisely for the benefit of future generations. Is it enough if we bequeath materialistic wealth for our future generations? Are cement houses and paper money the only requirements for a safe and healthy life? What kind of World do we want our future children to inherit? Do we want them to go round with skin cancer, blindness from cataracts etc. due to the thinning of the ozone layers. Ladies and gentlemen, I leave the answer to each individual present here. But I close with the beautiful words of the famous Feminist poet-writer Susan Griffin.

'This earth is my sister,
I admire her daily grace
Her silent daring,
And we admire

The strength in each other
All that we have lost
And all that we have suffered'.

Release, Restore and Reform

REV. DASS BABU*

A position paper presented at the Seminar on Communication for Development organised by the C.S.I. Communications Department in collaboration with CASA, Madras—23rd to 26th November 1992—Vijayawada.

Development is a word which has several shades of meaning. It is not always easy to define it in one word. It means several things to several people depending on the context in which it is discussed and understood. Speaking from the Christian perspective, development is in the first instance about releasing people and ultimately about transforming society. When we see a development programme we expect to see it among the poor and oppressed. People are caught, trapped in never-ending debt with the polluted environment, excluded from any voice or power. People are caught by the decisions and actions of fellow human beings who have economic and political power. Those decisions are deliberate to preserve and perpetuate the concentration of privileges in their hands. 'Mandal commission' and all the confusion and the chaos that is being seen nationwide in implementing the Parliament's decision and the verdict of the Supreme Court is an example. People are trapped; they need to be liberated.

Development is a continuing process. It is a process of total change of people and society. The process will be one of movement or growth towards total structural change in areas of economic, social, political and cultural structures. The process starts where people are with their perception of their situation and their needs. It involves an awakening to the social realities of their lives and a realisation of their capacity to change them. This change will be a process of releasing, restoring and re-forming/transforming the structures. Release, Restore and Reform are the three watchwords for our understanding of development. People are in bondage and they need release. People need to be restored from being mere subjects to their role as subjects in society. Society itself needs to be reformed/transformed.

Christian response

Christian response to the realities of our time is our commitment to the Mission of liberation as proclaimed by Jesus at Nazareth or the Nazareth Manifesto:

'He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives... to set at liberty those who are oppressed and proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord' (Luke 4: 18-19).

We Christians have not yet fully claimed our freedom from the un-biblical dichotomies in which the religion of the powerful has trained us. So long we divide the

material from the Spiritual, the individual from the community and the 'this-worldly' from the 'other-worldly'. Our individualistic, 'Spiritualized' and heaven-oriented lives hold us back from the commitment to the mission of liberation given to us by Jesus Christ.

We acknowledge that our words and actions are often different and see the need to overcome the gap for the sake of our credibility with the poor and our acceptance in the environments of other living faiths. Our response to social transformation is part of our whole response to share the message of God's love in Jesus Christ.

The structure of our churches has been fashioned primarily around the message—words, and hardly around social transformation—*deeds*. Our present structures need radical review in order to be more suitable for responding to human needs. In theological education in particular we need a theology of the people and of development. In this process the people must participate.

This situation demands us:

- (i) to identify and stand with the suffering poor and the oppressed as Christ did
- (ii) to draw on Christ's motivating power in order to be able to deal with the roots of poverty and oppression.
- (iii) to work as Christ did, in obedience to God's Kingdom and in solidarity with the poor, serving the release of all into new awareness.

Then our task is:

- (i) to enable the voiceless to have voice, the poor to have bases from which they can fight for justice
- (ii) to make structures suitable for responding to human needs
- (iii) to include the whole gamut of economic, social and political realities in our response.

Only then we can reflect God's love, Peace and justice. The vision for which we are called to act is one of a just society, envisaged by peaceful means wherever possible. In our various human situations of conflict we have no excuse to draw back from our commitment to social transformation and must remain committed to the people's struggles. Otherwise the desirable development will not take place and people remain groping in dark and underdeveloped. And under-development is a new word for Sin.

Development then is the process whereby the people, the poor and the oppressed being the primary bearers of

Rev. Dass Babu is the Director of the C.S.I. Communications Department.

humanization, liberate themselves from all forms of enslavement and create a condition in which there are no oppressors and oppressed. This frees persons, communities and nations to realise their full potential as every individual has access to wealth, power, respect, knowledge and well being. This liberating process involves fundamental changes in the structure of the social order we live in. Development is people transforming the world and creating their own future; thus it is participation in God's redemptive plan for mankind.

Communication

By and large, communication means exchange of information through message and it is two ways of course. This message has a mission when it becomes mass communication. The scope of the subject is not only vast and all-embracing from socio-economic problems to political issues to be reported, analysed and interpreted, it is equally important in its impact.

Arising from the reality of the poor and the oppressed enmeshed within a complex web of social structures relationships, there is an urgent need for the communication of the Gospel of liberation. The social character of poverty is clearly revealed in the Bible in several ways and inevitably drives us on to play the role of the Prophets and fight for justice. In other words, Christian communicator is a Prophet who is called to play the prophetic role in this rapidly changing society.

Print media

Information, whether political, social or economic is not free from control. Access to information is not easy everywhere. Even if it is available, more often than not, it is distorted, twisted and misinterpreted to suit the elite and the controlling bodies. The inside stories of the Karamchedu and Tsundur were not made known to the public. It is because the victims are the 'Harijans' as communicated to us but in fact they all are the Christians, the voiceless, helpless lot of society.

In its first historic session the U.N. General Assembly took up an important discussion on freedom of information in the Spring 1948 at Geneva and formulated certain conventions; among such is the freedom of information. In India, unfortunately, the flow of information is controlled by either big industrialists or by the political parties. The news we get is highly twisted and censored thus the poor and the oppressed are denied of correct information.

This situation naturally calls for urgency in coordinating the channels of communication media throughout the church and the Society of the poor and the oppressed. National organisations like CASA, C.L.S., I.S.P.C.K. and churches should come together and plan to develop communication network, since communication is the basic ingredient for development or for promotion of any social action and for the propagation of the Gospel.

Publication of books, pamphlets, magazines, comics the print media is another important means of communication which help tremendously in imparting knowledge and free flow of information. Never in the history of the cultural progress of mankind has the publication of books played such an important role as it is doing today.

'Face to Face' series by the C.L.S. Madras, and 'Sands' series by the I.S.P.C.K. Delhi, are the most important steps taken by the publishing houses. But they are not enough. We need more joint publications involving Church and organisations like CASA. It will then become truly a participatory communication. In fact the need for us to have a monthly is far greater than ever before. There is no forum for us to express ourselves nor encourage the poor and the oppressed share their joys and sorrows; their struggles and the agony. We all realise the media is not available for the masses, it amounts to justice denied to such people. The Church should realise the gravity of the situation and strengthen the outlets of communication.

Electronic media

Radio, Television, Videography, Audio-Cassette, Cinema, photography etc., the electronic media, and now the satellite communication has revolutionised the system. We are stunned at the growth of the electronic media particularly the cinema which has grown up to be a huge industry, positioned at number three today after steel and coal mining. But what type of movies are they? What are they catering to? Is there any message communicated to help the poor and the marginalised to come out of their situation? Films are mostly 'entertainers' with little attention to social relevance. Except sex and violence and perhaps car chasing you don't find anything worth in our movies. Television and Radio are the monopolies of the Government in India. We have regretfully come to the conclusion that the Radio and T.V. performance in informing, educating and entertaining their listeners and viewers has not been impressive. The media have failed to come up to their promise as instruments of mass communication. But we have to accept the fact that the mass media have a definite role to play in the total development of the people. It is far beyond our reach to go for the production of movies and T.V. programmes but we can, with the cooperation of the churches, produce documentaries at least on Videotapes. There are scores of subjects which need this treatment. Plight of the Dalits; atrocities on women, exploitation of the poor and the perennial problems like dowry deaths, caste system, class system etc. If blended with a social message the documentaries can have an immediate impact on the spectators.

Medium of Music

One of the most popular ways of reaching and motivating the people is through music. As someone has put it: it is a prophecy of what life is to be; the rainbow of promise translated out of seeing into hearing. A good song stirs the soul. It lifts the soul high and wings it with sublime desires.

The first action in drawing the masses together should be accomplished through the medium of music. Through village fairs and rural festivals the masses may be attracted to attend musical concerts where new message may be transmitted to them. There is a new movement in some cities where young poets with their teams held street concerts, street theatre, plays and singing their own compositions on the condition of contemporary society, economic, social and political. Such performances draw large crowds in cities and towns. This could be picked up and adopted for communicating the message. Young poets need to be encouraged to analyse the ills of society and write new songs to awaken our masses.

A. D. 2000 : The Environmental Crisis and Christian Response

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What is this environmental crisis that everybody is talking and writing about? How serious are the environmental problems? Who is responsible for this crisis? Can people stop this environmental degradation? Do Christians have a special role to play to restore the ecological balance? What should we do to help heal the earth? Does the Bible say anything about environment and ecology?

Indeed the Bible has much to say about our troubled environment. Old and New Testament authors recognised environmental problems of their days, analysed their causes and warned people to change their ways. Responsibility for the degradation of the environment today as well as in the Biblical times, rests solely on the shoulders of human beings, the only species to blame.

In recent years environmental problems have multiplied and have assumed such a dimension that the well-being, even the survival, of life on earth is threatened. As we near 2000 A.D. we must realise that we have very few years of Grace left to learn, mend and restore so that our world, our home, the earth, can flourish.

The following narration is organised to reflect the views at (1) Everything was good in God's creation, (2) The world is now suffering from many ills that we have come to recognise as environmental crisis, (3) People are solely responsible for the environmental crisis, (4) There is hope that we will not perish because of the crisis, and (5) The solution to the crisis lies in human beings establishing right relationships on the basis of Christ's teachings. We will freely make use of several Bible verses that will enable us to appreciate the predicaments of the earth, its bounty and inhabitants. Although these familiar and beautiful expressions were written about 2000 years ago, their relevance today speaks to the timeless quality of the Biblical message.

Heaven and Earth and all things visible and invisible

The world was made perfect. The act of creation is so ancient, so mysterious and so explosive that our words and understanding are utterly inadequate to comprehend its event. When scientists explain the origin of the

universe in an instant when everything exploded, the 'Big Bang', some 15,000,000,000 years ago we are reminded of Psalm 77 : 18.

The crash of your thunder rolled out, and flashes of lightning lit up the world; the earth trembled and shook.

In a sense we all were born in that moment, fifteen billion years ago. But we had to count down 10 billion years before the solar system and the Earth could take shape about 5 billion years ago, and another billion years before life could move on this planet. All this was part of God's plan and means of creation. Part of this mystery will always remain obscure for us. We were not there to hear the sounds of a million thunder and volcanic eruptions that shaped the earth. At the moment of the birth of the universe there was no air to vibrate and produce sound, no life that could hear sound, only the Word! We might just as well say that there was eternal silence as God worked on this planet.

No speech or words are used, no sound is heard; yet their voice goes out to all the world and is heard to the ends of the earth.

Ps. 19 : 3-4

You walked through the waves; you crossed the deep sea, but your footprints could not be seen.

Ps. 77 : 19

Today scientists estimate that the earth might harbour as many as 10 million different kinds of microbes, plants and animals although only less than 2 million kinds have been described by them. The living are but few and the extinct many! 99% of the organisms that lived on earth have vanished—gone extinct during the past 4 billion years of history of life on earth. All these life forms and the nonliving material that they share, and the mountains, rivers, sky, valleys and ocean speak of our own heritage and our relationship to the earth and God.

For in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible.

Col. 1 : 16

God created the heavens and stretched them out; he fashioned the earth and all that lives there; he gave life and breath to all its people

Is. 42 : 5

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Lord, you have made so many things ! How wisely you made them all ! The earth is filled with your creatures. There is the ocean large and wide, where countless creatures live, large and small alike. All of them depend on you to give them food when they need it.

Ps. 104 : 24,25, 27

We may not comprehend the complexities of life and the relationship between this living earth and the immense universe of pulsars, quasars, galaxies and black holes. We can only dimly perceive that there must be great meaning and wisdom in this creation. Wisdom asserts that it had a part in creation :

The Lord created me first of all, the first of his works, long ago. I was made in the very beginning . . . before the world began. I was born before the oceans . . . before the mountains . . . I was there when he set the sky in place . . . I was there when he laid the earth's foundations. I was beside him like an architect, I was his daily source of joy . . . happy with the world and pleased with the human race.

Prov. 8 : 22-31

Creation is not only mysterious, magnificent and wise, it is also good.

God looked at everything he had made, and he was very pleased.

Gen. 1 : 31

Everything that God has created is good ; nothing is to be rejected but everything is to be received with a prayer of thanks.

1 Tim. 4 : 4

We must not forget that everything—a worm, a snake, a prickly plant as well as the land, water and air—was certified to be good by the one who created it, and we humans have no right to defile and exploit anything. Indeed we have made ourselves the judges of what are good and bad in God's creation. We may have done this out of ignorance or selfishness but it is wrong. We could work the earth and take care of it, we could cultivate and guard it (Gen. 2 : 15) but we cannot pollute it, plunder it or own it. Nothing belongs to us.

The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it.

Ps. 24 : 1

For every wild animal of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the air, and all that moves in the field is mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and all that is in it is mine.

Ps. 50 : 10-18

All the silver and gold of the world is mine

Hagg. 2 : 2

This perfect world of God was a paradise. Everything was in harmony, the environment pristine and life in abundance in every ecosystem.

How clearly the sky reveals God's glory ! How plainly it shows what He has done.

Ps. 19 : 1

The whole world stands in awe of the great things you have done. Your deeds bring shouts of joy from one end of the earth to the other.

Ps. 65 :

You show your care for the land by sending rain ; you make it rich and fertile. You fill the streams with water ; You provide the earth with crops.

Ps. 65 :

The pastures are filled with flocks ; the hillsides are full of joy. The fields are covered with sheep ; the valleys are full of wheat. Everything sings and shouts for joy.

Ps. 65 : 12-

All of creation groans with pain

Today we can easily see that it is no more a perfect world. People have multiplied uncontrollably and disastrously. So have their need, greed and selfishness. Within the last 50 years we have damaged every ecosystem on earth. Our own survival is now threatened. We have synthesised 7 million artificial chemical compounds many of which are poisoning life in rivers, air, forests and home. We continue to pollute the land and sea with radioactive material that could damage life for thousands of years. The greenhouse gases threaten to increase the global temperature leading to sea level rising, flooding, unpredictable climate changes and disruption of communities. 95% of ozone has been depleted over the Antarctic by the refrigeration chemicals we have been releasing. As a consequence skin cancer has doubled in the last 20 years. The tropical forests occupy only 6% of the world's landmass yet they are the home for some 50% of all plants and 70% of all animals in the world. These forests are destroyed at an alarming rate of 11 million hectare every year. Along with habitat destruction we may be losing about 100 species everyday at a rate of extinction never before witnessed in the history of the earth.

Even as our natural resources and life support systems are continually destroyed the human environment is rapidly deteriorating. It took a million years for the population to reach its first billion mark in 1880s. Now it takes only 8-10 years to add another billion people. There is great inequity in the world. Millions struggle everyday to gather fodder and fuel and to obtain a little clean water to drink. A small section of the people live in luxury enjoying comfort and riches beyond earthly needs. Some define their neighbours in the other hemisphere as nothing more than 'potential export markets' to be exploited. Yet, one billion people suffer from hunger. Millions of children scavenge for food and 40,000 children die daily due to starvation-related diseases.

The tongue of the infant sticks to the roof of its mouth for thirst ; the children beg for food, but no one gives them anything.

Lamentations 4 :

A world, already crowded with 5.4 billion people should support a population of 10 billion people in 2050 A.D. The most unfortunate of humans are the children and the children yet to be born. They are inheriting an earth on which they may not find enough space to play. Today we are ruining the earth even more than those who lived before us.

Your country was ruined and desolate—but now it will be too small for those who are coming to live there. And those who left you in ruins will be far removed from you. Your people born in exile will one day say to you, 'This land is too small—we need more room to live in!'

Is. 49 : 19, 20

The environmental problems are particularly severe in third world countries and India is among the most affected. India's population is expected to reach 1 billion in the next 8 years, adding two persons every second. Expanding urban population will soon become 350 million, more than the total population of India at the time of independence. The urban people will exploit their 700 million rural relatives to sustain a life-style based on material needs and market economy. Soon we will have 100 million illiterate people, the largest of any country. Land is taken over for housing, industries, roads and recreation, our agricultural base will erode and might not be able to supply food for all. Even now more than 100 million people suffer from undernutrition. 53% of India's land is degraded and 70% of surface water is contaminated. Our forests have dwindled to about 10% against the desired minimum of 33%. More than 100 million livestock suffer from a 60% shortage in fodder. Floods and droughts have been increasing. As the crisis worsens insecurity will lead to greater conflicts between people who are already divided by religion, caste, language and other barriers.

In short, as in the powerful words of St. Paul,

All of creation groans with pain.

Rom. 8 : 22

There should be no mistaking. The world has never had a crisis of this nature that threatens the very existence of all life including human life and the integrity of the physical well being of the earth. We begin to wonder this was the world God found good. We wonder if this is what Prophet Joel had in mind when he was writing 800 years before Christ.

*Has anything like this ever happened in your time
The fields are bare ; the ground mourns because the corn is destroyed, the grapes are dried up, and the olive-trees are withered.
The seeds die in the dry earth.
The cattle are bemoaning in distress because there is no pasture for them ; the flocks of sheep also suffer.
Even the wild animals cry out to you because the streams have become dry.*

Joel, Ch. 1

Even as we are worried about the destruction of forests and disappearance of wildlife, and as the heads of nations gather in Rio and elsewhere to look for solutions to the threatening environmental problems we are reminded of a prophecy,

*Weep and wail, cypress trees—the cedars have fallen ! those glorious trees have been destroyed ;
Weep and wail, oaks of Bashan—the dense forest has been cut down ! The rulers cry out in grief ;
their glory is gone ; Listen to the roaring of the lions :
their forest home along the Jordan is destroyed.*

Zech. 11 : 1, 3

You shall die like mortals

Who is responsible for this environmental crisis ? We are, people are, every last one of us. No one else is responsible, not one of the 10 million other living things that live on the earth. In the 4 billion years of life on earth there have been major extinctions of species due to natural causes such as global climate changes, drifting of continents and perhaps meteorite impacts. Yet, even during the 'Great Dying' when the dinosaurs became extinct about 65 million years ago the rate of extinction was perhaps 1 species per 100 to 1000 years. Today the rate of extinction could be as high as 1 species per 15 minutes. We human beings polluting and plundering the earth are entirely responsible for this unprecedented high rate of extinction. We humans are the most destructive force that the earth has ever witnessed.

Like fire they eat up the plants. In front of them the land is like the Garden of Eden, but behind them it is a barren desert.

Joel 2 : 3

Therefore the land mourns, and all who live in it languish ; together with the wild animals and the birds of the air, even the fish of the sea is perishing.

Hos. 4 : 3

The earth was blessed with everything we needed, before we emerged. We now know that all good things—clean water, pure air, fertile soil, healthy food, blue sky, dense forests, majestic wildlife—are suffering.

I brought you into a plentiful land to eat its fruits and its good things. But when you entered you defiled my land, and made my heritage an abomination.

Jer. 2 : 7

The earth dries up and withers ; the whole world grows weak ; both earth and sky decay. The people have defiled the earth by breaking God's laws and by violating the covenant he made to last for ever.

Is. 24 : 4-5

Laws cannot be broken forever, covenant cannot be violated with impunity. We are on a dangerous course of self-destruction. The environmental crisis will worsen and we will perish without dignity.

You are gods, children of the Most High, all of you ; nevertheless, you shall die like mortals

Ps. 82 : 6, 7

Cursed is the ground because of you

For many people environment and ecology imply the physical world around them and perhaps the forest and some wildlife. Therefore the environmental crisis is often equated with the destruction of natural resources, pollution and extinction of species. The remedy ? One or another measure of conservation and management. This is a simplistic view that overlooks the fundamental problem. The environmental crisis is in fact a crisis in the human soul. All that we listed as happening to the environment are but manifestations or symptoms of the crisis in the human component of this planetary ecosystem. A crisis in the soul cannot be remedied by scientific and technological breakthroughs. Human ingenuity can help but only at the level of tinkering here and there to fix a leak. Solution to the environmental crisis requires esta-

blishment of proper relationship with all of God's creation both nonliving and living. Unfortunately we humans have not learnt to establish right relationship even among the members of the human family. How then can we hope to take care of the millions of kinds of other organisms that share this earth with us? We may have tools and techniques that will continue to document ozone depletion, increase in greenhouse gases and radioactive plutonium released from nuclear power plants but we can never solve the environmental problems if we fail to understand the root cause of the crisis.

You hypocrites ! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time ?

Lk. 12 : 56

Imagine a vast stretch of beautiful forest with rivers, flowers, fruits and lovely animals—a Garden of Eden. Today if we enter this forest and read two alternate commands, one urging us 'to cultivate it and guard it' or 'to till it and keep it', and the other suggesting we control it or subdue and dominate it, most of us will choose the latter command. This is sin. It is a great mystery when and why the human species alone preferred this selfish and greedy life-style. Unfortunately we insist on preferring a life-style that oppresses all other living and non-living things and accelerates the environmental crisis.

For from the least to the greatest of them, everyone is greedy for unjust gain.

Jer. 6 : 13

We want to own everything and more of it even though it does not belong to us. We buy fertile agricultural lands or a beautiful stretch of seashore for housing and profit, unmindful of the millions who sleep every night on pavements next to sewage. The seashore is God's ; so are the food plants and animals that we alter with our knowledge of biotechnology and then claim ownership with patents and intellectual property rights.

You are doomed ! You buy more houses and fields and add to those you already have. Soon there will be nowhere for anyone else to live, and you alone will live in the land.

Is. 5 : 8

Your land must not be sold on a permanent basis because you do not own it ; it belongs to God, and you are like foreigners who are allowed to make use of it.

Lev. 25 : 23

I placed the sand as a boundary for the sea ; a perpetual barrier that it cannot pass.

Jer. 5 : 22

For we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.

1 Tim. 6 : 7, 9

All that we do to nature is a reflection of all that we do to our fellow human beings. If we have power to oppress and exploit weaker fellow humans how easy it is for us to subdue the earth and dominate and destroy its nonhuman inhabitants ?

Listen to this, you that trample on the needy and try to destroy the poor of the country. You say to yourselves We'll find a poor man who can't pay his debts, not even the price of a pair of sandals, and we'll buy him as a slave.

Amos. 8 :

Listen ; The wages of the labourers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. You have lived on the earth in luxury and in pleasure ; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.

James 5 :

Their hands are skilled to do evil ; the official and the judge ask for a bribe, and the powerful dictate what they desire ; thus they pervert justice.

Micah 7 :

What we do to fellow human beings and the earth is oppressive that the ecological balance is upset and the web that connects us to all else on this planet and the cosmos is breaking. Are we ready to ease the load ?

You put loads on people's backs which are hard to carry, but you yourselves will not stretch out a finger to help them carry those loads.

Luke 11 :

Will the back of the Earth be broken forever ? there any hope that our children will live on a good earth ?

New heaven and a new earth

There is hope, there must be hope and it is our responsibility to embrace this hope and start acting before it is too late.

For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth.

Is. 65 :

New heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home.

II Peter 3 :

Without this hope all that we can do is try to remedy our problems with a little bit of help from some modern science and technology only to find ourselves creating more problems and sinking further into the quicksand of environmental chaos. The Bible abounds in God's concern for us and hope of a better day.

He sustained him in a desert land, in a howling wilderness waste ; he shielded him, cared for him, guarded him as the apple of his eyes.

Deut. 32 : 1

Let those who wept as they sowed their seed, gather the harvest with joy.

Ps. 126 :

There is hope that we may not perish like mortals.

Listen, I tell you a mystery ! We will not all die, but we will be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.

1 Cor. 15 : 51-5

Like trees my people will live long lives.

Is. 65 : 2

Babies will no longer die in infancy and all people will live out their full life span.

Is. 65 : 20

Open your mouth, and I will feed you.

Ps. 81 : 10

I have come in order that you might have life—life in all its fullness.

John 10 : 10

his hope is also extended to the sparrows, the wild
ers and the wild grass and God's concern extends to
orms of life and nonlife as much as to innocent children.

And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from the left, and also many animals?

Jonah 4 : 11

The pastures are filled with flocks ; the hillsides are full of joy. The fields are covered with sheep ; the valleys are full of wheat. Everything sings and shouts for joy.

Ps. 65 : 12-13

All the days of the earth, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night shall not cease.

Gen. 8 : 22

Perhaps the most emphatic statement of hope is that St. Paul's :

Creation itself would be set free from its slavery to decay and would share the glorious freedom of children of God.

Rom. 8 : 21

This hope moves us to action, action to restore, reconcile, heal and love. We must do all this to help God give new life to the earth' (Ps. 104 : 30) and keep his promise of 'life that never ends' (Ps. 133 : 3). Then, on the way, we might be able to perceive what this 'glorious freedom' is all about.

Love one another and you will live

What can Christians do to heal the earth? Christians have no exclusive monopoly over this act of restoration. Every faith and every tradition has inherent wisdom and insight that must be evoked so that all people can respond to the environmental crisis. Christians must be partners in this venture aligning themselves with people in all walks of life, of other faiths, activists and everyone who is genuinely committed to the restoration of ecology. Environmental crisis affects all God's children.

However, Christians are Commanded to heal the earth because Jesus set the example of healing. In a sense the coming of Jesus some 2000 years ago was to establish new relationships in a world where the human component had gone astray. A major part of Jesus' ministry was to reestablish proper relationship by teaching us to eliminate inequities, injustice, oppression and greed which are the root causes of the environmental crisis.

Take care ! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed ; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.

Luke 12 : 15

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me . . . to bring good news to the poor . . . to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free.

Luke 4 : 18

Our increasing concern for the earth community in this closing period of the 20th century is perhaps not a coincidence. The environmental crisis itself has come of age. Christians have no choice but to respond, and respond they must in a manner that must surprise themselves.

Was Jesus concerned only with the welfare of the human beings and not of other living things and the physical world? A deeper reflection would show that Jesus was an environmentalist who correctly identified the force destroying the integrity of God's creation as sinful human beings.

Through the Son, then, God decided to bring the whole universe back to himself.

Col. 1 : 20

There is thus this cosmic dimension not only to our origins but to our relations with this planet, this universe and God. This is both liberating and humbling.

A thousand years to you are like one day . . . we last no longer than a dream . . . seventy years is all we have . . . Teach us how short our life is so that we may become wise.

Ps. 90 : 4-12

What is man that you notice him ; mere man that you pay attention to him ? He is like a puff of wind ; his days are like a passing shadow.

Ps. 144 : 3, 4

God noticed people and gave them a seemingly simple commandment that could bring harmony in the human and the nonhuman world.

Love the Lord your God . . . and Love your neighbour as you love yourself . . . DO this and you WILL LIVE.

Luke 10 : 27-28

The awareness that the environment is in crisis leads us to define our neighbour not merely as fellow *Homo sapiens* but all of God's creation, visible and invisible. Powerful human beings oppress weaker brothers and sisters as much as the animals, plants, and the good earth. Therefore, we must rescue, defend and love these neighbours as much as our fellow human beings.

Learn to do good ; seek justice, rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow.

Is. 1 : 17

Let each one of you look not to your own interest, but to the interests of others.

Phil. 2 : 4

Food is necessary not only for people who are hungry but also for the thousands of animals that lose their habitat everyday ; plants thirst as much as people when our rivers are made to run dry ; who can welcome all living things in the sea to a home free from poisons? Vast stretches of land lie naked waiting to be clothed with lush vegetation ; the air is polluted and sick and the earth is imprisoned and

someone should visit them and take care of them. (Matt. 25 : 35, 36).

Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.

Matt. 25 : 40

It is plain that we have not learnt to love each other, let alone our non-human neighbours. This, in spite of the fact that it is God's great commandment and the Bible affirms again and again that we are one people.

God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in man made temples... From one man he created all races of mankind and made them live throughout the whole earth.

Acts 17 : 24, 26

People of Israel, I think as much of the people of Sudan as I do of you.

Amos. 9 : 7

We live not in a relationship of love but of divisions, discrimination, prejudice, hatred and ignorance as linguistic, caste and many other artificial groups. Our existence within these groups are exploitive, selfish and oppressive. We live as though we have no neighbours on this planet teaming with people longing for love. The environment will continue to be in crisis, worsening every day if we refuse to affirm unconditionally, that all people are our brothers and sisters.

Christians can no longer be passive observers of an earth in turmoil. All our resources, and we are blessed

with many, must be activated to respond to the crisis. Environmental issues should be an essential component of our Bible studies, Sunday schools and prayer group school curricula and seminaries. Deeper understanding should move us to action at all levels. Such action must include political involvement, environmental activism, preaching and education and opting for and promoting drastic changes in life-styles. Changes will be necessary in patterns of land use, energy consumption, avoidance of pesticides and rejection of abuses of market economy and consumerist life-styles. Christians can no longer be content with their dialogue with God alone. As we seek for communion with all of God's creations, affirming the intrinsic worth of everything the earth holds, we cannot escape from the realities that oppress the world. We must seek to understand the ways in which political ideology, economic structures, multinational corporations, nuclear and military lobbies, even religions perpetuate systems that destroy the earth. Fortunately, a great many people, activists, scientists, theologians and philosophers, genuinely concerned about the environment, offer us concepts and models. We must receive these, study them, adopt what is relevant and share our views and experiences with others.

We live on a good earth ; God's earth. Can we live on a piece of land, free from poisons, soil erosion and exploitive relations ? A land on which humans, plants and animals thrive

a land that has rivers and springs, and underground streams gushing out into the valley and hills ; a land that produces wheat and barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives and honey.

Deut. 8 : 10

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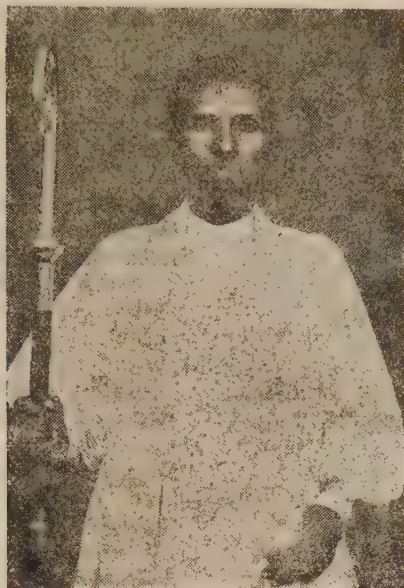
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NEWS FROM THE DIOCESES



BISHOP S. J. THEODORE

KARIMNAGAR

Rt. Rev. Sanki John Theodore is the new bishop of the Karimnagar diocese. He succeeded bishop K. E. Swamidas who retired in the month of August. Late Moderator Ryder Devapriam had consecrated the Bishop at the Cathedral at Karimnagar. Former Moderator Bishop P. Victor Premasagar and the former bishops of the diocese, Bishop B. Prabhudas, Bishop G. B. Devashayam and Bishop K. E. Swamidas were present. Bishop T. B. D. Prakasa Rao preached the sermon, stressing on the importance of being co-workers with God in His ministry. Bishop D. Pohirajulu, Bishop V. Azariah, Bishop D. N. Samuel, Bishop William Moses and Bishop B. G. Prasada Rao took part in the service.

Prof. George Koshy, the General Secretary and Mr. D. P. Kingsley, the Treasurer of the Synod had their role in the service.

Rev. B. J. Manikya Rao, Rev. B. Sadanandam, Mr. M. John Wesley, Prof. A. Amrutha Rao and several other diocesan leaders made the service a memorable one.

Bishop John Theodore was born to Rev. S. John David and Deva Krupamma in the year 1943 Thimmareddipet Nizamasagar area, Nizamabad district. He had his schooling in Alir and Secunderabad. Although admitted to a College, could not obtain a degree but later on did P.D., B.D. and M.Th. at the U.T.C. Bangalore. He was ordained in 1970 and since then had been shouldering a number of responsibilities at various places in the diocese. He was the treasurer of the Alir Group Council; the manager of CSI High School Alir, and C.S.I. U.P. High school at Jagtial. He was elected as the Vice-Chairman

of the diocese. He was the executive committee member of the Synod for two times.

His wife Mrs. Hana Saraswati is an active member in the Church. She was elected Secretary of the Diocesan Women's fellowship for the period of 1991-93. She attended the Synod Meetings at Tirunelveli and the 8th Quadrennial Conference at Kottayam. She did her teacher's training after S.S.L.C. and worked as SGBT teacher at Jagtial.

Bishop Theodore is an outspoken person and known for his sincerity and commitment for the Lord's service. As he is settling down in his office as the Bishop, we congratulate him and wish him a successful ministry.

—Editor.

TIRUNELVELI

THE HISTORY AND HERITAGE OF CHRISTIANITY IN TIRUNELVELI AREA

BISHOP JASON S. DHARMARAJ, *Tirunelveli*
Deputy Moderator

A Consultation on the History and Heritage of Christianity in Tirunelveli Area was held on 23rd to 25th October 1992 at the Bishopstower, Palayamkottai, Tirunelveli-2. It was co-sponsored by the Tirunelveli Diocese of the Church of South India, The Centre for Research on the New International Economic Order, Madras and the All India Association for Christian Higher Education, (AIACHE), New Delhi. Scholar and Historians from various parts of India attended this Consultation.

Study of the history of Christianity in Tirunelveli has always been a source of inspiration for the Church. An Archives cum Ecumenical Research Centre, set up at Palayamkottai will be a fitting tribute to the pioneers who planted the Church here. This project was considered as very necessary at this Consultation.

Bishop Samuel Amirtham gave the message at the opening Worship, providing a Biblical Basis to the Consultation (Ref. Deut. 26 : 5-11, Luke 2 : 1-4). Bishop S. Iruthayaraj of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Palayamkottai offered the prayer and the Benediction.

Prof. D. S. George Muller presented the Case for the Consultation.

The Papers presented were :

1. From Tranquebar to Tirunelveli upto 1838.
—Prof. G. J. Devadason
2. The Fruits of the Christian Mission in the Southern Part of Tamilnadu including the former State of Travancore.
—The Rev. Dr. J. R. Chandran
3. The Print Media and Christian Literature.
—Prof. David Packiamuthu
4. Roman Catholic Arm of the Tirunelveli Church upto 1835.
—Dr. Fr. Emmanuel Raj S. J.
5. Contribution of the Church to the Emancipation of Women in India.
—Prof. Mrs. Caroline Jebadurai
6. Medical Ministry and the care of the Handicapped in the Tirunelveli Church.
—Dr. G. M. Jeyabalan
7. Indigenous contributions to the Tirunelveli Church.
—The Rev. R. Joseph

Dr. Mrs. E. G. Vedanayagam, Research Consultant, AIACHE, gave valuable suggestions for setting up the proposed Archives cum Ecumenical Centre Palayamkottai.

A sound and light presentation of Amy Carmichael of Dohnavur, on 24th October 1992 in Sarah Tucker College Campus was a highly inspirational recreation of pioneering in case of the girl-child.

The Consultation suggested :

1. The establishment of Bishop Stephen Neil Ecumenical Study and Research Centre with all modern facilities for the preservation of ancient Manuscripts.
2. Collection of all available materials relating to the heritage of the Tirunelveli area from every possible source.
3. Creation of an awareness for the need for the preservation of rare books, records, and manuscripts bearing on the history of the Church in Tirunelveli.
4. Seeking the assistance of Churches and Donor Agencies which may be interested in such a project.

The Rev. R. Joseph thanked all the participants, specially the Bishop in Tirunelveli for his farsighted plan to preserve the history of the Church for the good of the future generations. The Consultation came to a close with closing Devotions on Sunday (25-10-1992) noon.

DIOCESE OF NANDYAL

The Department of the Christian Education of the Church of South India and the All India Sunday School Association co-sponsored the Andhra Pradesh Regional Sunday School Teachers' Training Institute at Nandyal on 27, 28 and 29 November 1992, as a Memorial Tribute to the Most Rev. Dr. Billa Ryder Devapriam, the former Moderator of the Church of South India. Forty delegates from the Six Diocese in Andhra Pradesh attended the Training Institute. This is the Second Programme thus co-sponsored, the First such was held at Kodaikanal earlier.

Briefly, the salient features of the Andhra Pradesh Regional Sunday School Teachers' Training Institute are as follows : Rt. Rev. Dr. Kuruvilla, Bishop in North Kerala and Chairman Christian Education, C.S.I. delivered the Inaugural Address. Rt. Rev. Theodore, Bishop in Karimnagar gave the Keynote Address. Rev. Joshua Inbakumar, General Secretary All India Sunday School Association dwelt on the themes : Historical Development of Christian Education, Sunday School Teacher and Effective Christian Communication and Personality Development of Christian Children. Rev. B. D. Prasada Rao spoke on the themes : Relevant and Effective Curriculum and Approaches to Christian Education and Evaluation of Sunday School Work.

Rev. Dr. Dass Babu the Director of Communications, CSI, demonstrated the Technique of Communication. Rev. Dr. Arun Gopal dwelt upon Faith Formation. Mr. Michael Vijaya Rao elucidated the Methods of Teaching and spoke about The Process of Learning.

On the last day Holy Communion was celebrated by Bishop Kuruvilla, Rev Christopher and Rev. Devavaram, according to the order of the CSI. The Bishop gave the message.

The sessions were chaired by Rev. Christopher (Krishna-Godavary Diocese) Rev. Devavaram (Medak Diocese) and Mrs. Kanthamma Chandrashash (Nandyal Diocese) respectively.

Certificates of having attended the Regional Sunday School Teachers' Training were given to the delegates by Rt. Rev. Kuruvilla. Mr. Devadanam sang a song which depicted the three-day programme. The training Programme was concluded with the Benediction from the Chairman, Christian Education, Rt. Rev. Kuruvilla.

The participants evinced keen interest in the three-day programme which was packed with discourses and discussions. The interaction was interrogative, thought-provoking, reflective and constructive.

There was a brief cultural programme presented by the delegates where songs, action songs, monoaction, magic performance and silent and oral skits were performed. Earlier Rev. P. E. Sangeetha Rao, Vice-President of the Diocese of Nandyal welcomed the Chairman and Director, Religious Education C.S.I., the General Secretary AISSA

and the delegates, and resource persons. The welcome was followed by a brief talk by Mr. Leslie Nathaniel, Financial Administrator-cum-Treasurer, Diocese of Nandyal when he presented a view of the vision of the Former Bishop and Moderator Rt. Rev. Dr. Ryder Devapriam and rendered an account of the progress made and the aspirations cherished by the Diocese.

At the conclusion of the Three-Day Programme Mr. Michael Vijaya Rao expressed what a rare opportunity, privilege and blessings it was to have had the Regional Sunday School Training Programme at Nandyal and also to have had it as a memorial tribute to the former Moderator Most Rev. Dr. Ryder Devapriam. He thanked the Chairman and the Director, Christian Education of the C.S.I., the General Secretary AISSA, the Resource Persons, delegates and the Accountant Mr. K. Bhaskar and the Senior Warden KNH Mr. M. Paranjothy and all those who made the Training a profitable and happy experience.

K. MICHAEL VIJAYA RAO
Director, Religious Education
Diocese of Nandyal

KARNATAKA NORTHERN DIOCESE

FELICITATION

It was a historical and remarkable event in the history of St. Peter's Church, C.S.I., Hubli on November 29, 1992. Our beloved Moderator Vasant P. Dandin was

felicitated by St. Peter's Church as well as the Andhra Christians of Hubli. On this auspicious occasion, people, from all walks of life gathered in great numbers.

Soon after the arrival of our Moderator to the Church 'GAJENDRA' elephant garlanded the Most Rev. Vasant P. Dandin and Mrs. Dandin as a token of our love and affection.

Mrs. Tabita Dandin, Rev. J. Prabhakar Rao, the Area Chairman, Mrs. Vestfall and Dawin of Germany were the distinguished guests. On behalf of the NK 'A' Area Rev. Prabhakar and Mrs. Vestfall, EKKW extended their greetings on this occasion.

The procession started with 'Kolata and Dance' by our school children. Rev. James Talapati, Presbyter-in-charge felicitated the Most Rev. V. P. Dandin and the distinguished guests. As a mark of our honour to the elevation of his highest office of the Moderatorship a shalwa and golden ring were presented to him during the colourful function.

Mr. D. R. Joshua and Prakasha Rao expressed vote of thanks to all the volunteers and participants. Rev. Muddebihal and members of the Pastorate Committee were present. The function came to an end with the blessing and benediction of the Most Rev. Vasant P. Dandin, Moderator, Church of South India.

REV. JAMES D. TALAPATI
Presbyter-in-Church.



Felicitation to Moderator on 29-11-92 at St. PETER's Church, Hubli.

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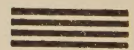
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